THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS DETECTED AND DISPLAYED,

Ipswich Public Library
Ipswich, Massachusetts

IN TWO

DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED AT THE

FIRST PARISH IN *IPSWICH*,

APRIL 4, 1799,

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY FAST DAY

THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF

MASSACHUSETTS,

By LEVI FRISBIE, A. M.
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN IPSWICH.

Published by the request of many of the hearers.

PRINTED BY ANGIER MARCH, NEWBURYPORT,
MDCCXCIX.

Advertiſement to the Reader.

THOSE readers who heard the following Sermons delivered, will doubtleſs obſerve that ſome alterations have been made in the mode of expreſſion, and that ſome ideas have been added, eſpecially in marginal notes, more fully to compleat and illuſtrate the ſenſe of ſeveral branches of the ſubject; but they will be ſatisfied that the general nature, complexion and dreſs of the diſcourſes remain the ſame as when they heard them.

And thoſe readers who have never heard them, will, it is hoped, peruſe them with ſerioufneſs and ſelf-application; and with a candid belief that the author was not moved to preach, or to publiſh them by any blameable principle or paſſion, but by a ſincere deſire to impreſs on the minds of people truths and conſiderations which he deems of the moſt indubitable reality, magnitude and importance.

EPHESIANS, V. 11.

AND HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF DARKNESS, BUT RATHER REPROVE THEM.

AS this day is conſecrated to the ſolemn duties of *humiliation*, *faſting* and *prayer*, it may be uſeful, in order to impreſs our minds with ſentiments and affections ſuitable to the occaſion, to conſider the evil nature, the deſtructive tendency and conſequences of ſin, as ſuggeſted and implied in the text, that we may be the more forcibly deterred from holding any fellowſhip with it, or with others in the commiſſion of it, and more ſtrongly excited to repent of it in ourſelves, and reprove it in others, both by word and example.—And as the nature and deſign of the duties and ſervices of this day require the greateſt ſolemnity, humility and ſincerity, I ſhall, therefore, attempt, not ſo much to pleaſe your imaginations with beauty of ſentiment and elegance of expreſſion, as to impreſs and affect your hearts with the plainneſs, ſimplicity and weight of intereſting truth—And as I am perſuaded 'tis my duty to ſpeak with great freedom and faithfulneſs, ſo I hope you will attend with proportionable ſerioufneſs, meekneſs and candour; more eſpecially becauſe our nation ſeems to be in a ſituation peculiarly critical, intereſting and dangerous; being threatened with unuſual troubles and calamities—Great and forcible, therefore, are the motives for conſidering and lamenting our criminal follies and offences before God; for humiliation, repentance and reformation; and for imploring a gracious deliverance from the guilt and power of our tranſgreſſions, and from their merited impending puniſhment.

AND that we may be excited to the exerciſe of theſe affections and duties, let us proceed to the con-

ſideration of the ſubject before us by attempting in the

First place to explain briefly, what we are to underſtand by the unfruitful works of darkneſs.

Secondly, What is implied in avoiding all fellowſhip with them, and even reproving them—and

Thirdly, What are the reaſons implied and ſuggeſted in the text for avoiding all ſuch fellowſhip, and

Fourthly, Conclude with a ſuitable application.

We are then in the *firſt place* to explain what we are to underſtand by the unfruitful works of darkneſs—and

1ſt. By works of darkneſs, we are to underſtand in general, works of wickedneſs—Darkneſs, in the figurative language of the holy ſcriptures, ſignifies ignorance, error, falſehood, diſſimulation and ſecrecy; alſo ſuch ſufferings, calamities and judgments, as are the natural effects, or the deſerved correction and puniſhment of iniquity. And although works of darkneſs may primarily intend nocturnal revelling, lewdneſs and debauchery, and other vices which are plotted and concealed under the curtain of darkneſs; yet that they are not confined to theſe kinds of wickedneſs is evident, becauſe the Apoſtle, having reminded the Epheſians in the preceding verſes of various crimes and offences to which they had been formerly addicted, mentions the idolatry of covetouſneſs among them, which is not a ſin that neceſſarily ſeeks to hide itſelf under the veil of ſecrecy; and then adds, Be not partakers with them: That is, have no communion in theſe works of wickedneſs, nor any fellowſhip with the perpetrators of them. In like manner he exhorts the Romans to caſt off the works of darkneſs, and put on the armour of light—And he clearly intimates what he intended by works of darkneſs, by adding in the next verſe, Let us walk honeſtly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envying—Strife and envying are therefore works of darkneſs, as much as

thoſe crimes which are committed under the covert of ſecrecy and darkneſs. We are therefore warranted to comprehend all kinds and degrees of criminal folly and wickedneſs under the general denomination of *works of darkneſs*. Some ſins are aptly termed works of darkneſs on account of their ſecrecy, obſcurity and treachery; others on account of that impurity, baſeneſs and deformity which prompt them to dread the eyes of man, and hide themſelves from the face of day. And all deeds of wickedneſs are properly termed works of darkneſs, becauſe they originate from Satan the prince of darkneſs; are conceived and cheriſhed by the ignorance and error of the human mind; break forth in deeds of diſorder, deformity and miſchief, and naturally terminate in guilt and ſhame, vexation and miſery. And thoſe calamities which naturally ſpring from wickedneſs, or are the merited puniſhment of it, are in the figurative ſtyle of ſcripture called darkneſs. Thus the Prophet laments: We waited for light, but behold obſcurity, for brightneſs, but we walk in darkneſs*; and he threatens the wicked that they ſhall look unto the earth, and behold trouble and darkneſs, dimneſs of anguiſh; and they ſhall be driven to darkneſs.† Hence

2dly. Works of wickedneſs are called unfruitful, to expreſs how worthleſs and barren they are of all real advantage or pleaſure. For although they promiſe advantage and happineſs, they are deceitful, and do not fulfill their promiſes—or if they afford a kind of profit and pleaſure, they are uncertain, unſatisfying and momentary; for the triumphing of the wicked is ſhort, and the ſweeteſt tranſgreſſions terminate in gall and wormwood. St. Paul appeals to the Roman chriſtians, whether they had received any advantage from thoſe luſts and corruptions in which they had formerly indulged themſelves. What fruit have ye in thoſe things whereof ye are now aſhamed‡?—This pointed queſtion implies that wickedneſs is not

* Iſaiah lix. 9. † Iſaiah viii. 22. ‡ Rom. vi. 21, 22

only barren of all true pleaſure and benefit, but that it ultimately produces a bitter crop of ſhame and miſery ; for, adds the Apoſtle, the end of theſe things is death. So that there is a figure in the word *unfruitful*, by which leſs is expreſſed than intended, intimating that the works of darkneſs are not ſimply unfruitful, but poſitively miſchievous and deſtructive. They are of ſuch a deluding, infatuating nature, that they blind and pervert the minds of thoſe who commit them, and while they promiſe them an harveſt of advantage and pleaſure, they yield to them the bitter fruits of remorſe and repentance in this world, or the ſtill more bitter fruits of miſery and ruin in the world to come.

Having briefly ſtated what we are to underſtand by the unfruitful works of darkneſs, we proceed in the

Second place to conſider what is implied in avoiding all fellowſhip with them, and in rather reproving them.

And it implies in the *firſt place*, that we ſhould entertain no friendly affection for ſin, or indulge or cheriſh in our hearts any deſire or inclination to the commiſſion of any kind of wickedneſs, but ſhould abhor and deteſt it, and even ſhun the very appearance of evil. Sin is altogether evil ; 'tis the natural ſource and meritorious cauſe of all calamity ; 'tis offenſive to God, and injurious to our neighbour and ourſelves. We have therefore the utmoſt reaſon to abhor and avoid it. And we muſt have a diſpoſition to do this, or we never ſhall abſtain from all fellowſhip with iniquity. For if we do not hate ſin as evil in its own nature, though we may abſtain from the open and atrocious *acts* of wickedneſs, yet we ſhall be guilty of the exerciſe of it in our hearts and affections, and ſhall be in danger of the commiſſion of actual tranſgreſſions ; or at leaſt of a ſecret propenſity towards thoſe vices which we dare not practiſe, and of countenancing and encouraging them in others, and ſo of

holding a degree of fellowſhip with them in their iniquity.

And this hatred and oppoſition to ſin in our hearts, will imply true repentance. For can we deny that we are all ſinners? Have we not been chargeable with criminal exerciſes and actions? If therefore we are inſpired with a juſt hatred of ſin, if we are diſpoſed to abhor and renounce it, as wicked, odious and hurtful, we ſhall be impreſſed with an unfeigned ſorrow that we have been guilty, in ſo many inſtances, of omitting that which is good, and doing that which is evil. And we ſhall lament our tranſgreſſions before God, and condemn ourſelves for having been ſo fooliſh and criminal; and this will excite us to implore his forgiveneſs through Jeſus Chriſt; to reſolve upon an effectual reformation, and a more conſtant and univerſal practice of the duties of virtue and holineſs, and to frequent and earneſt ſupplication to God that he would enable us by his ſpirit and grace, to execute theſe reſolutions.—Now unleſs we are the ſubjects of theſe internal principles and affections with reſpect to ſin, we ſhall not ſincerely and effectually abſtain from all fellowſhip with it, or with thoſe who are the perpetrators of it, nor cordially and zealouſly diſcourage and reprove it wherever we diſcover it, whether in ourſelves or our neighbours. For as the heart and affections are the great ſource and ſpring of all our actions, ſo theſe will correſpond in their nature to our internal diſpoſition, and conſequently a principle of hatred to ſin and love to holineſs, deeply rooted in our hearts, is the only ſure and effectual ſpring of our abſtaining from all kinds of fellowſhip with wickedneſs.

2dly. Abstaining from all fellowſhip with the works of darkneſs, implies that we ſhould not only abſtain from *ſome*, but from *all* kinds and degrees of wickedneſs. We cannot indeed expect to be perfectly free from ſin, while we continue in this world; we ſhall be ſubject, while here below, to many criminal infirmities and imperfections; and always liable to be

ſeduced and ſurprized into the commiſſion of ſin by ſurrounding temptations. But we have no licence to commit any ſin; and the commands of God require us to abſtain from *all* iniquity. And we may attain to a determined hatred and oppoſition to all ſin, and to a freedom from the voluntary indulgence of all known wickedneſs. And therefore if we indulge ourſelves in the practice of deliberate wilful wickedneſs, we can have no ſcriptural evidence that we are ſincere chriſtians, or have any genuine hatred at all to the deeds of darkneſs. But there are ſome perſons, and we have reaſon to fear their number is not ſmall, who, though they abſtain from ſome ſins, to which they are not ſo much impelled by inclination or intereſt, or from which they are deterred by fear of diſgrace, loſs or puniſhment, yet indulge themſelves in others, with little reluctance or regret. But this muſt be exceedingly criminal and dangerous, and proves that they are very far from complying with the precept in the text, to hold no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs. And we can have little reaſon to compliment ourſelves with the flattering idea of our virtue, of our obedience to the commands of God, or of any well founded proſpect of future peace and bleſſedneſs, becauſe we abſtain from ſome ſins, and practiſe ſome duties, if at the ſame time we indulge ourſelves in the allowed practice of ſeveral kinds of known wickedneſs, and in the omiſſion of what we cannot but know to be our duty. Nor can we excuſe ourſelves by ſhutting our eyes againſt the light, and remaining in ignorance of what, in many caſes, is right or wrong, ſin or duty. If we really hate ſin, and ſincerely deſire to avoid all fellowſhip with every kind and degree of it, and to practiſe their oppoſite duties and virtues, we ſhall be ſolicitouſly critical and diligent in examining every object, action, or purſuit propoſed to our choice, ſo far as may be neceſſary to determine whether it be wiſe or unwiſe, good or evil. If from a neglect of ſuch examination

we have been deceived and misguided ; and if we have adopted and profecuted criminal meafures and actions thro' ignorance and mifapprehenfion,in cafes where we might have been better informed, if we would have taken proper pains to obtain and improve the means of information, we are certainly by no means excufable—Or even if we have had the means of fufficient information, and have attended to them with fome degree of care and diligence, and yet were blinded and led aftray into folly and wickednefs by the force of evil prejudices and corrupt paffions, we cannot reafonably plead exemption from great blame and defert of punifhment—For thefe evil paffions and prejudices, by which we have been deluded and perverted, being finful in themfelves, can never excufe the errors and vices which have refulted from them as their natural confequences and effects. Were not the Jews guilty of the moft aggravated wickednefs in crucifying the Son of God ? and yet they did it through ignorance ; they did not know that he was the Lord of Life and Glory—But their ignorance did by no means excufe their crime, becaufe they committed it in the exercife of wicked prejudices and paffions ; and becaufe they might have known that Jefus was the Son of God, if they would have attended impartially to the evidence of his divine character and miffion ; or if, through prejudice and paffion, they had not willfully fhut their eyes againft it. Thofe therefore who would avoid all fellowfhip with the works, and the workers of iniquity, *muft*, and if they are honeft and faithful they *will*, be careful and affiduous in examining, difcovering and determining what *are*, and what are *not* real works of darknefs, and who *are*, and who are *not* the perpetrators of them.

3dly. If we would comply with the exhortation in the text, we muft abftain from all fellowfhip with the works of darknefs in our words and difcourfes—In.

deed if we hate and avoid the indulgence of ſin in our hearts, we ſhall be likely to avoid it in our language. It is, however, of great importance to be cautious and vigilant againſt all vanity, fooliſhneſs and profanity in converſation; againſt uttering falſhood, detraction, ſcandal, raſh and groundleſs cenſures and reproaches againſt our neighbour. Perſons who hate ſin in their hearts, do not always hate it, and guard againſt it in their words, with that care and watchfulneſs which the evil and malignity of it demand; and therefore they are in danger, from the force of ſelf-intereſt, prejudice or paſſion, or from an overheated zeal againſt what they deem baſe, ungrateful, perfidious, cruel and impious, of expreſſing themſelves againſt theſe evils, with a bitterneſs, raſhneſs and ſeverity unbecoming that ſpirit of meekneſs and benevolence, which the goſpel requires. There are, indeed, ſome crimes and vices either ſo ſordid and brutal, or ſo impious and abominable, that it ſeems almoſt impoſſible to paint them in colours too dark and dreadful, or to expreſs our abhorrence of them, and indignation againſt them with too great ſtrength and ſeverity of language. But all crimes and vices are not of this nature. And our neighbour may be guilty, through ignorance and infirmity, of faults and failings, which though criminal, do not deſerve to be cenſured with ſo much vehemence and aſperity. We ought to examine the conduct of our neighbours and fellow-citizens, with coolneſs and impartiality, and to be convinced, upon ſufficient evidence, that they are really as unreaſonable and criminal, as they are, by ſome repreſented, before we undertake to cenſure and condemn them. For if we ſhould happen to be influenced in our cenſures and reproaches by corrupt prejudice and paſſion, or by giving a too eaſy credit to the reports and clamors of thoſe perſons, who from wicked principles and deſigns, are diſpoſed to blacken the characters and conduct of their neighbours, we ſhould be guilty of holding fellowſhip with them in their falſhood and malev-

olence; and this is a crime that we are not likely to eſcape without particular vigilance—For it cannot be denied that detraction and defamation, or the circulating of vile reports, and evil ſurmizes concerning men of worthy characters, is a ſin too deplorably prevalent: So that even men of honeſt intentions, are in danger of being enſnared by the artful and vicious, into the commiſſion of it.

We ſhould alſo be on our guard againſt all converſation that even borders upon profane jeſting, and trifling with ſacred things; or which bears upon it any tincture of wantonneſs or impurity. 'Tis a ſhame, ſaid the Apoſtle, in the verſe immediately following the text, even to ſpeak of thoſe things which are done of the wicked in ſecret—And if men of pure and delicate minds, who hate ſin in their hearts, and ſincerely condemn it as vile and abominable, are notwithſtanding in danger of being drawn in to ſpeak unadviſedly with their lips; how much greater is the danger of thoſe who have no real averſion to iniquity? They muſt be extremely expoſed to utter the language of artifice and falſhood, lewdneſs and impiety; to treat the name, the truths and ordinances of God with great indecency and profanity, not to ſay contempt and outrage. They muſt be in imminent danger of being ſeduced by corrupt paſſions and powerful temptations, to go very criminal lengths in holding fellowſhip with the wicked, in uttering the language of profanity and impurity; of reproach, calumny, bitterneſs and revenge againſt their fellow creatures. I do not ſay that all who do not hate iniquity in their hearts, are actually guilty of theſe crimes; but I ſay they are in great danger of being thus guilty. For what ſhould prevent them, when they are ſtrongly prompted to it by provocation or temptation, ſeeing they do not, in their hearts, habitually abhor all ſuch wickedneſs? They ought therefore to be deeply ſenſible of the duty and importance of obtaining a better ſpirit of mind, and of praying earneſtly and frequently to the

God of all grace, that it may be wrought in them by the truth and energy of his word and ſpirit—And whatever may be the predominant diſpoſition of their minds, they ought by no means to give utterance to criminal and miſchievous ſentiments and paſſions; to do this will render them guilty of a double and aggravated wickedneſs; inaſmuch as the expreſſion of ſuch ſentiments and paſſions in language, tends to cheriſh and ſtrengthen the power and prevalence of them in their own minds, and to pervert and debauch the minds of others, and by this method to diffuſe criminal and pernicious principles and opinions far and wide, to the ſubverſion of all fundamental truths and virtues, and the great injury and diſorder of ſociety civil and religious. For if any perſon be an enemy to true religion, to ſound morality and to good government, and give himſelf a liberty to vent and propagate his enmity and oppoſition to them in converſation, in ſpecious and deluſive arguments and objections, he may be inſtrumental, by ſuch a conduct, of doing infinite miſchief to the cauſe of virtue and religion, and to the order and happineſs of civil ſociety. I do not aſſert that all ſceptics and infidel philoſophers are knowingly and intentionally aiming at the injury and ruin of human virtue and happineſs, but I venture to aſſert, that whoever oppoſes, condemns, and endeavours to ſubvert the religion, the morality, the laws and government of his country, unleſs they are eſſentially and obviouſly corrupt and oppreſſive, is evidently guilty of holding fellowſhip with the works of darkneſs, and that we ought to guard againſt his principles and practice, and ſtudiouſly avoid them, as we would a deadly peſtilence, or an over-whelming deſtruction. But theſe obſervations ſhould not be confined to any particular ſpecies of iniquity, inaſmuch as all ſins of every kind and degree, whether they be more directly againſt God, our neighbour or ourſelves; whether they be more public or private, againſt ſocieties or individuals, are works

of darkneſs, they originate from darkneſs and deluſion, they tend to produce darkneſs, diſorder and miſery, and therefore no one ought to hold any fellowſhip with them, but every one ought to condemn, diſcourage, and endeavour to ſuppreſs them, in the whole tenor of his converſation. And

4thly. As we ought not to hold fellowſhip with wickedneſs in our hearts or in our language, ſo we ought more eſpecially to avoid all communion with it in our practice. To favour it in our hearts, to encourage it with our lips is highly criminal, but to promote and encourage it by our practice is additionally criminal. All practical irreligion, profanity and impiety, all intemperance, revelling and debauchery, all falſhood, injuſtice, oppreſſion, cruelty, treachery, ſedition, treaſon and rebellion, are emphatically works of darkneſs, deeds of wickedneſs and folly; and to practiſe them, is to have fellowſhip with them, and to be joint partakers with thoſe who commit them, in their wickedneſs, guilt and infamy. I cannot entertain an idea of my hearers ſo diſhonourable to their character, as to ſuppoſe any of them ſtupid, ſhameleſs and profligate enough profeſſedly to approve, juſtify or vindicate any of the crimes and vices which have been juſt now mentioned: They will conſequently agree with the Apoſtle in the text, and with the preacher who is diſcuſſing it, that they are all works of darkneſs; that they are dark, crooked, vile and miſchievous practices, and therefore no one ought to venture upon the commiſſion of them, or allow himſelf in the leaſt degree to purſue them, but to renounce all fellowſhip with them, and communion in them with the utmoſt deteſtation and abhorrence—And ſo far as any one has been ſeduced and betrayed into the commiſſion of any of them, by the force of his own corruptions, or the arts and allurements of the Prince of darkneſs, or his emiſſaries, he ought to reflect upon it with the deepeſt regret and repentance, to implore the forgiveneſs of God through Jeſus Chriſt, and to reſolve that by the help

of his grace he will conduct for the future with a determined watchfulneſs, wiſdom and virtue.

But 'tis not enough that we renounce all fellowſhip with wickedneſs ourſelves, we ſhould alſo in the 5th place, uſe all proper means and exertions to indance others to do it—And eſpecially ſhould we abſtain from affording them any ſupport, countenance or encouragement, in any corrupt and wicked paſſions, deſigns and practices.

It will not be denied that there are thoſe, who, not content with practiſing wickedneſs themſelves, entice and encourage others to join with them in it. They want their ſupport, influence and aſſiſtance, and therefore, by various means and artifices, draw them in to be joint partakers with them in their crimes and vices. Error and wickedneſs love company; 'tis often the caſe that they cannot accompliſh their purpoſes without it. If any perſons have adopted capital and dangerous errors in religion and morality, they are often very zealous and active in making proſelytes to their ſentiments. And they do this not from motives of benevolence, not becauſe they are ſatisfied that it would be really for the advantage of their neighbours, and for the benefit of ſociety in general to adopt their ſentiments, but they want to keep themſelves in countenance*: For the more perſons they can perſuade to adopt their tenets, the more they are ſtrengthened in the belief and in the open profeſſion of them. Beſides they may have ſome ſchemes of ambition, intereſt or pleaſure to accompliſh, for which purpoſe a belief of their errors is neceſſary, and therefore they are ſolicitous to perſuade others into this belief, that they may join and aſſiſt them in the accompliſhment of their projects.

* It is not improbable that the propagators of error frequently imagine that they are moved by a principle of benevolence: But muſt it not be an unreaſonable ſtretch of charity to ſuppoſe that perſons are moved by benevolence to propagate thoſe dangerous errors which inſtead of being beneficial to mankind, tend directly to their miſery and ruin?

MANY crimes and vices are of ſuch a nature that they cannot be proſecuted without company and aſſiſtance. Complicated projects of fraud, oppreſſion, robbery and plunder, require numbers to carry them into execution. The principal authors of theſe projects will therefore endeavour to entice others to unite with them in the execution of them. Rioting, gaming, and debauchery cannot be practiſed without company. Plotting, ſedition and rebellion againſt government, require numbers to unite in their accompliſhment; and hence the promoters and fomenters of theſe crimes, uſe all their ſubtilty and influence to draw in, not only the wicked, but the ignorant and unſuſpecting, to join them in their iniquitous and deſtructive conſpiracies—They endeavour by various artful ſuggeſtions and miſrepreſentations to impreſs the minds of thoſe who will liſten to them with a belief that their rulers are deſtitute of wiſdom, integrity and faithfulneſs; that they have a deſign to deprive them of liberty and property, and to oppreſs and enſlave them. And thus they ſtir them up to ſuſpicion, enmity and oppoſition to all order and good government, and excite them to meaſures tending to plunge the ſtate into the moſt miſerable condition of anarchy and confuſion.—And this they do, not from that benevolence to the people, or concern for their rights and liberties, by which they pretend to be actuated, but to gratify their own pride, avarice or reſentment, or that they may aſſume the power and wealth of the nation into their own hands for the promotion of their own ambition, pleaſure and parade. But as all theſe crimes of irreligion, injuſtice, rioting, treachery, ſedition and rebellion, are works of darkneſs, and every one is bound by the laws of God, by the obligations of virtue, and the reſpect and concern due to the order, ſafety and happineſs of ſociety, to have no fellowſhip with them, or grant them any countenance or encouragement, he ſhould not only avoid them himſelf, but diſcourage all others from being partners in

them—For it is not enough that a perſon abſtains from the actual commiſſion of wickedneſs himſelf, he is bound to diſſuade and prevent all others, as far as poſſible, from having any communion with it—But if inſtead of this, he encourage and prompt them, even ſecretly and indirectly, to the neglect of piety and virtue, and the commiſſion of crimes and vices, he is juſtly chargeable with being a partaker with them in their wickedneſs. But is there not deplorable reaſon to apprehend that there are perſons, who while they abſtain from the actual practice of impiety and wickedneſs themſelves, encourage and excite others to the commiſſion of them? They are too prudent and cautious to appear openly in the practice of ſuch deeds of darkneſs; they are unwilling to expoſe themſelves to the diſgrace or puniſhment in which ſuch conduct might involve them; and therefore they prompt and employ others to be tools and agents for the accompliſhment of their corrupt purpoſes—By many dark and ſubtil intrigues and ſtratagems, they pervert and beguile not only the reſtleſs and miſchievous, but the uninformed and credulous, and prompt them to oppoſe and deſtroy truth and righteouſneſs, peace, order and government, under the pretence of combating and ſuppreſſing error, oppreſſion, uſurpation and tyranny. If thoſe who are thus made the dupes of the immoral, the irreligious and the ambitious, were well aware of the nature, the tendency and probable iſſue of their proceedings, they would, at leaſt many of them, renounce them with abhorrence; but being deceived and miſguided, by thoſe who act behind the curtain, they fondly imagine they are doing ſervice to the cauſe of truth and virtue, liberty and happineſs, when in reality they are taking the moſt direct and certain methods to ſubvert and deſtroy them—yet they are criminal for permitting themſelves to be thus deceived and miſguided; becauſe they might know the nature and tendency of their conduct if they would but attend to the means of information; and 'tis hard to

conceive that they would ever engage in ſuch meaſures if they were not in a degree prediſpoſed to it by certain criminal principles and paſſions. But thoſe who inſtigate and encourage them are by far the moſt blameable, even though they take no direct and active part in theſe pernicious proceedings, becauſe they know the nature, deſign and tendency of them, and are, indeed, the prime inventers and promoters of their exiſtence, operation and progreſs; and are therefore principally chargeable with the ſinfulneſs and guilt of holding fellowſhip with the moſt miſchievous and deteſtable works of darkneſs.

But ſome may flatter themſelves that they have a ſufficient plea of juſtification, becauſe they neither engage in theſe works of wickedneſs themſelves, nor encourage others to engage in them. They do not wiſh to concern themſelves with the affairs of other people, nor involve themſelves in party diſputes and contentions. They conceive it moſt ſafe and prudent to remain ſilent, and permit every one to take the courſe moſt agreeable to his intereſt and inclination. But will this cold and ſilent neutrality ſtand the teſt of prudence or patriotiſm? Can it be juſtified upon the principles of reaſon, benevolence or intereſt? If the flames have begun to kindle on your neighbour's houſe, can you keep ſilence and be innocent? If your neighbour is running into certain deſtruction, are you not bound, if poſſible, to prevent him? If you have reaſon to believe that a company of ruffians have formed a deſign to deprive him of his property and peace, his life or liberty, are you not bound to warn him of his danger, and aſſiſt him with your counſels and exertions to prevent or repell it? Silence, in many caſes, may look like giving conſent to error and wickedneſs, or a tacit encouragement to the authors of them. If therefore we hear a neighbour, or a fellow-citizen diſputing againſt truth and righteouſneſs, in a manner that ſhews he has adopted, or is in danger of adopting

ſuch principles as are dangerous and deſtructive to religion and virtue, and even to his own and others ſalvation, ſhall we hold our peace? If we ſee or hear another ridiculing ſtrict morality and religion, and jeering at whatever is deemed ſacred and holy, ſhall we be ſilent? If we obſerve a third curſing and ſwearing, and abuſing the holy name of his maker, ſhall we remain unconcerned hearers of ſuch bold impiety? If we ſee others violating the ſabbath, neglecting or profaning both the day and the ordinances of God, by ſpending it in idleneſs, amuſement, buſineſs or pleaſure, ſhall we forbear to remonſtrate to them upon their conduct, and to convince them, if poſſible, of its criminal and pernicious tendency and conſequences? If others are chargeable with fraud, injuſtice, cruelty and oppreſſion, are they to be regarded with indifference? If numbers around us are thoughtleſs, vicious and extravagant; if nominal chriſtians, and ſuch as have recognized the ſacred bonds and obligations of God's covenant, are covetous, worldly, ſenſual, and even in a degree diſſolute in their moral converſation, is nothing to be ſaid to them or done for them to rouze them to ſerious conſideration, and to excite them to repentance and reformation? Is it enough in all theſe caſes to avoid approving and countenancing the follies and vices which have been mentioned? Does not our text, and do not reaſon and ſcripture, charity and faithfulneſs, declare with one voice, that we ought to reprove them, and to reſtrain them, as far as it can be done with propriety and juſtice? And if all other immoralities and vices ought to be diſcountenanced and reſtrained by frowns and reproofs, what ſhall we ſay of the faults, the crimes, the indignities which are committed againſt the morality, the religion, the honour, ſafety and happineſs of our country?—muſt we paſs by theſe with ſilent indifference? If we hear any of our acquaintance or fellow citizens complaining and caviling againſt our government, reproaching and condemning its meaſures and regulations, cenſuring and

vilifying its miniſters, and repreſenting them as weak or wicked—corrupt and oppreſſive, aiming by inſidious and artful plans and meaſures, to oppreſs and enſlave the people, and to enrich and aggrandize themſelves at the expence of their conſtituents—when we hear ſuch things as theſe ſlyly inſinuated or boldly aſſerted, can we believe them? Can we believe that thoſe men whom we once honored, admired and eſteemed, as the wiſeſt, the nobleſt, the moſt virtuous and ſpirited patriots and friends of their country, who have ſuſtained innumerable labors, and braved innumerable dangers, to procure, eſtabliſh and preſerve its liberty, independence and happineſs—can we believe that theſe men are all at once become fools and knaves and traitors—and that we owe more reſpect, gratitude and confidence to ſtrangers, to men of yeſterday, and even to the intriguing agents of a foreign Republic, which has treated us with perfidy, oppreſſion and cruelty, than to theſe long-tried friends and ſaviours of our country? Is it poſſible that any perſons can believe theſe falſe, groundleſs and wicked inſinuations and reproaches? And if they hear them vented and aſſerted, can they, ought they to hear them with patience and ſilence? Ought they not, if poſſible, to frown them out of countenance, and to bear an unequivocal teſtimony againſt them? For what ſays our text? Have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, but *rather reprove* them.

But are we all then to ſet up for reprovers and reformers of the follies and vices of our neighbours, and of each other? It may be anſwered, yea, in a certain manner and degree. There are various methods of reproving faults, follies and vices—and although every perſon is neither qualified nor called to become a reprover in the moſt preciſe and proper ſenſe of the word; yet all may be reprovers in one or other of thoſe ways which are now to be immediately mentioned.

And if we would be ſuitable and ſucceſsful reprovers of criminal folly and wickedneſs, we muſt in the

1ſt place begin with ourſelves. This kind of charity may with great propriety begin at home. 'Tis our duty to conſider and examine the ſtate and character of our own hearts and actions—faithfully and impartially to enquire, diſcover and determine, what is truth and error, wiſe and fooliſh, good and evil, with regard to ourſelves; and having become ſatisfied and determined upon theſe points, then we ſhould compare our own ſpirit and conduct with the right and the wrong we have diſcovered, and ſee how far they agree with the one or with the other—And ſo far as we find we have neglected the right and followed the wrong, we ſhould rebuke and condemn ourſelves with the utmoſt faithfulneſs and ſeverity. We ſhould here admit of no ſhuffling, no excuſes, or ſelf-juſtifying pleas, but with the greateſt honeſty and impartiality condemn and abhor our own ſins and vices, and commence againſt them, a fixed, a determined and everlaſting enmity and warfare—We ſhould repent of them, humble ourſelves before God for them—earneſtly implore his forgiveneſs in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, and the communication of all that grace and ſtrength which are neceſſary to crucify and deſtroy them, and to live, for the future, lives of exemplary piety and virtue.—And when we have thus obtained, in ſome good meaſure, peace with God, and peace in our own conſciencies, a ſacred regard to God's honor and religion, and a ſpirit of juſtice, meekneſs and charity towards our neighbour, then we ſhall be prepared to reprove his faults and vices, with humility and benevolence, united with prudence, faithfulneſs and reſolution—But if every one who has ſome degree of this ſpirit of piety and charity, be not warranted to ſet up for a formal reprover, yet he may in one way or other, teſtify his diſlike and averſion to vice and fooliſhneſs—He can feel, he can manifeſt in his countenance, in his geſture and actions, his concern, his uneaſineſs and

diſguſt at whatever is contrary to truth and decency, piety and righteouſneſs—But if he be a man of knowledge and prudence, of influence and authority, he can point out to the offender, at a proper time and place, his prejudices, his errors and vices; with the nature, the ſinfulneſs, and the pernicious and fatal tendency of his proceedings; he can remonſtrate againſt them, and exhort and perſuade the offender with all the force of argument and affection, to conſideration, to repentance and reformation—A father, a teacher, a maſter, a ſuperior, can perform all this, with great propriety towards his children, his pupils, his domeſtics, and thoſe who confeſs themſelves his inferiors—But I cannot now deſcend to particular inſtructions upon this point—Wiſdom, humility, meekneſs, and a benevolent concern for the benefit of individuals and ſocieties, will teach men better than a thouſand precepts, how they ought to bear a proper teſtimony againſt all error, folly and wickedneſs.

But that mode of reproof, which is, perhaps, moſt unexceptionable and perſuaſive, and which, every one who is diſpoſed to be virtuous and uſeful, will purſue, is, ſetting an example in his own conduct of whatever is right, laudable, and important to be done by others. It is a common obſervation, that example has much more influence than precept. Let us then, if we would reprove and diſcountenance every thing wrong and vicious in others, avoid it ourſelves, and maintain a courſe of ſteady, uniform, unaffected prudence, virtue and piety in our own conduct—Let our actions teſtify that we have a cordial, a ſacred regard to God and religion, to righteouſneſs and charity; and to the order, the ſafety, the honor and proſperity of civil ſociety and government. Let us fear God, reverence his word, treat rulers and magiſtrates with honor and decency, and pay a ſuitable reſpect and ſubmiſſion to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake. This will tend as much, or more than every thing elſe, to ſhame, to diſcourage and ſuppreſs diſorder and wick-

ednefs, and to promote private and public peace, regularity and happineſs—A goodly number, and eſpecially a large and decided majority of men of this character, would be an indiſſoluble band of brethren ; an hoſt of heroes, an impregnable bulwark againſt all the ſecret or open operations and attacks of darkneſs and error, of intrigue, artifice and wickedneſs.

Let me add, finally, that another excellent and effectual method of reproving and diſcouraging error and wickedneſs, is to carry them, by prayer and ſupplication, before the tribunal of God, and beſeech him to take them under his management and controul. When they have become ſo prevalent, ſo overbearing and outrageous that human wiſdom, power and authority cannot reſtrain their force and violence, then our only reſource is in God ; He can with infinite eaſe flaſh upon the minds of the wicked ſuch a clear conviction of their ſinfulneſs, their guilt and danger, as will effectually diſpoſe them to a cordial repentance and reformation : Or he can ſpeak to them with the voice of thunder, make them tremble at his preſence, and ſhrink down into their own littleneſs as worthleſs worms of the duſt—He can hedge up their way with thorns, turn their counſels into fooliſhneſs, and blaſt all their projects in a moment. Thus Hezekiah prayed before the Lord and ſaid, O Lord God of Iſrael, that dwelleſt between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth ; thou haſt made heaven and earth—Lord bow down thine ear and hear, open, Lord, thine eyes, and ſee ; and hear the words of Sennacherib which hath ſent him to reproach the living God. Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beſeech thee ſave us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only*—The Lord heard him, and ſent an overwhelming deſtruction upon his impious enemies.

Not only the wiſe and powerful, but the aged and

* 2 Kings, xxix, 15, 16, 19.

infirm, females and children, may eminently ſerve the cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs, of private and public ſafety and happineſs, by offering up to God in its favor their ſincere and earneſt prayers and ſupplications : For he regardeth the cry of the humble, and doth not forget their prayer—he heareth them when they call upon him, and ſaveth them out of their diſtreſſes. And we may conclude the preſent diſcourſe by obſerving that ſuch prayers are highly ſuitable and neceſſary at this day of darkneſs and difficulty—when there is too much reaſon to lament that ſo many are inclined to hold a dangerous and criminal fellowſhip, in a greater or ſmaller degree, with the unfruitful works of darkneſs. Alas for them ! they conſider not that the darkneſs of error and ſin, lead directly to the darkneſs of miſery and ruin—Involved in darkneſs, they do not diſcover the criminal nature, and the fatal tendency of vicious and infidel principles and practices—They are to be pitied as well as cenſured for their ſpirit and conduct—That they do not ſee that an indulgence to pride, vanity and extravagance, to error, infidelity, indifference and averſion to the ſervice and worſhip of God, the doctrines, ordinances and bleſſings of the goſpel, and a propenſity to ſenſuality, intemperance and ingratitude for the numerous and diſtinguiſhing favors of heaven ; and eſpecially for the bleſſings of mild, equitable and efficient laws and government, are faults and vices, exceedingly blameable and ruinous—That they are blindly purſuing ſuch practices as tend directly to plunge themſelves and their country down a dreadful precipice into a gulph of unſpeakable diſorder and miſery. Let us then repent, and pray that the darkneſs of ſin may be diſſipated, that it may not overwhelm us with the darkneſs of miſery—and that God would give us the light of knowledge, virtue, unmoleſted peace, liberty and proſperity—through the merits of Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, be endleſs praiſes. AMEN.

SERMON II.

EPHESIANS, V. 11.

AND HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF DARKNESS, BUT RATHER REPROVE THEM.

IF the ſun, moon and ſtars were all blotted out from the fair face of heaven, our condition would be unſpeakably gloomy and miſerable; but if all the light of moral and religious truth were extinguiſhed from the world, our condition would be ſtill more gloomy and miſerable. Perhaps all will not readily believe this aſſertion. But if they would ſufficiently conſider the ſubject, they muſt be convinced of the truth of it. For moral and ſpiritual truth and goodneſs are the light, the life and happineſs of the ſoul; but ignorance, error and ſin, are its darkneſs, its death and ruin. Therefore the means and meaſures which God has employed to preſerve and revive the light of truth and holineſs, have been apparently much more wonderful and illuſtrious than thoſe which he has employed to ſupport and cheriſh the natural light. The moſt eminent miniſter of truth and goodneſs which God has employed for expelling error and wickedneſs from the world, is his own dear ſon, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. He came into the world to give light and life to mankind. And the truths, promiſes, precepts and beneſits of his goſpel having been diffuſed, in a great mea-

ſure throughout the earth, have had a powerful effect in diſpelling the darkneſs and ſinfulneſs in which it was involved. But the powers of deluſions and wickedneſs ſtill operate in the world, and oppoſe and endeavour to deſtroy the influence and prevalence of truth and goodneſs, and to introduce the reign of error and ſin, of darkneſs and death. We are required, therefore, as we regard the honour of God, the benefit of man, and the purity, ſafety and happineſs of our own ſouls, not to encourage the works of darkneſs, the deeds of falſhood and wickedneſs; nor to have any affection for them or fellowſhip with them: What this fellowſhip is, and what is implied in abſtaining from it, and holding no communion with the deeds of darkneſs, but in rather reproving them by all means calculated to diſcountenance and ſuppreſs them, we have already conſidered.

But perhaps ſome may be ready to enquire what neceſſity there is for all this care and labor and ſolicitude to oppoſe and ſuppreſs thoſe paſſions and actions which are denominated works of darkneſs? Why is it not as well to let mankind alone, and ſuffer them to chuſe and purſue ſuch principles and practices as they pleaſe, and not attempt to reſtrain or confine them to a contrary ſyſtem? Would it not be better to permit them the enjoyment of full liberty to think and act as they judge will be moſt conducive to their own benefit and happineſs? To ſuch queries, if we can ſuppoſe any perſons inclined to propoſe them, we may anſwer by conſidering in the

Third place the reaſons implied and ſuggeſted in the text, why we ſhould avoid all fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, but rather reprove them. Theſe reaſons are included in the two epithets which are given to theſe works, viz. that they are darkneſs, and that they are unfruitful.

1ſt. They are dark works, or works of darkneſs; becauſe, as we have already obſerved, they are works of ignorance, error and deluſion. He who works or

walks in darkneſs, does not well know what he is doing or whither he is going. He is liable to work wrong, and to wander aſtray; to do miſchief and run into danger, while he imagines he is doing good, and walking in ſafety. So he who is doing evil, is, in a moral ſenſe, working and travelling in darkneſs. His ſins are founded in ignorance and error. For he does not know, or duly conſider whence they come, whom they injure, or to what iſſue they tend.

He is ignorant or inconſiderate from whence his works of darkneſs originally proceed. He does not ſufficiently conſider that they come from the Devil, who is emphatically ſtyled the Prince of darkneſs; and who is the original author and promoter of all wickedneſs. The Devil having rebelled againſt God, and become a ſinful, guilty, miſerable creature, is full of enmity to God, and man. He labors to oppoſe and overthrow God's plans of wiſdom, holineſs and mercy; and being full of envy and malice againſt mankind, he uſes every exertion of power and artifice to tempt and betray them into ſin, guilt and miſery. He would be glad to root out and expell every plant and ſpark of truth and goodneſs, religion and liberty, peace and happineſs from the world, and turn it into a ſtage of vice, confuſion, wretchedneſs and ruin perfectly reſembling his own infernal abode. But as he cannot accompliſh his deſigns by power, conſtraint and violence, therefore he endeavours to do it, by ſubtilty and deceit; by ſuch falſe ſuggeſtions, ſuch artful temptations and allurements as are adapted to influence the appetites and paſſions of men, and lead them to the commiſſion of wickedneſs, under the deluſive idea of doing right, and aiming at true honour, ſafety and happineſs. He endeavours to perſuade them that there is little or no evil in violating the laws of God—Or if there be any evil in doing it, yet no calamity or puniſhment will ever overtake them for ſuch violations. Thus he deceived our firſt parents by aſſuring and perſuading them that they ſhould not ſure-

ly die, if they *did* tranſgreſs the command of God.—And thus he endeavours to deceive and ſeduce their poſterity. And when they comply with his temptations, 'tis, at leaſt in part, through ignorance and inconſideration. They do not reflect from whence theſe temptations come. They conceive them to be the operations and inventions of their own minds, and that a compliance with them will be productive of benefit and happineſs, and hence they proceed to indulge them, till they are convinced by their own ſorrowful experience, that they have been deceived and ſeduced by the ſpirit of darkneſs to their own ſhame, vexation and miſery. It is neither neceſſary nor poſſible to trace, and declare the numerous arts and ſtratagems which Satan uſes to ſeduce, to injure and deſtroy mankind. But 'tis ſufficient to aſſert in general, that as he is our mortal enemy, ſo he will employ every meaſure which infernal policy can deviſe, to delude us into ſin, and plunge us into miſery. And he will employ not only his own power and ſubtilty for this purpoſe, but if he can find any of our fellow-creatures baſe and wicked enough to become his tools and agents, he will prompt and aſſiſt them to delude and betray their neighbours into ſuch folly and wickedneſs as tends to plunge both themſelves and their tempters, and even the innocent and unſuſpecting into infamy and ruin. Now as the works of ſin are works of darkneſs, becauſe they are, in the manner deſcribed, the effects of the dark, deceitful and malicious operations of Satan; every one ſhould be aware of *this*, and avoid all fellowſhip with them.

But the ſubtil devices and temptations of the Devil are not the only ſources of ſin. The corrupt principles and paſſions of men, are not only criminal in themſelves, but the ſprings of all kinds of practical wickedneſs; and theſe principles and paſſions are dark and deluſive. For men do not conſider and perceive the evil nature and pernicious tendency of them; and therefore are ſeduced and impelled by them into nu-

merous crimes and vices. The appetites and paſſions of men are reſtleſs and craving, there is a pleaſure in gratifying them, and people are not ſenſible that ſuch a gratification, eſpecially when 'tis irregular and exceſſive, is ſinful and ruinous. The profit or pleaſure which appetite and paſſion propoſe and promiſe to men, infatuates their minds, and prevents their diſcovering the vexation and miſery into which they are plunging. Paſſion is blind and violent, it ruſhes forward in the dark to the poſſeſſion of its object, or the accompliſhment of its purpoſe, without ever pauſing to conſider their criminal nature, or their deſtructive conſequences—Like children who cannot, or will not, believe that thoſe fruits which they love can give them ſickneſs and pain, or that there can be any evil in getting them wherever they can come at them; ſo we are naturally very unwilling to ſee or believe that thoſe purſuits and practices which give us the poſſeſſion or the proſpect of advantage or pleaſure, can be either hurtful or criminal. That which does not diſpleaſe, and ſeems not to injure ourſelves, we do not imagine can be offenſive or hurtful to others; and we are ready to be angry at them for reſenting, oppoſing or condemning it.

And we are apt to flatter and deceive ourſelves, by giving ſpecious and virtuous names even to our ſins and vices. Thus ſome people will call a diſbelief and contempt of all religion, *free thinking*, and liberty from the prejudices of education and the yoke of ſuperſtition. Laſciviouſneſs and debauchery they term gallantry—Rioting and drunkenneſs, good cheer—Cheating and knavery, ſkill and policy—Avarice and parſimony, prudence and œconomy—Inſult and revenge, ſpirit and courage—Groundleſs jealouſy and ſuſpicion of rulers and magiſtrates, political caution and watchfulneſs—Oppoſition to law and government, order and ſubordination, they miſcall patriotiſm. love of liberty, and hatred of tyranny and oppreſſion. In theſe and other inſtances, too many perſons give falſe and flat-

tering titles to their criminal paſſions and practices, and to cheat themſelves into a fond belief that they are real virtues, or at worſt not odious vices.

On the other hand, they often give invidious and reproachful names to moral virtues and chriſtian graces, and having thus dreſſed them up in the garb of ſavage beaſts, they imagine themſelves warranted to hunt them down with unrelenting artifice and violence—Or if they cannot by theſe means diſguiſe and conceal the evil and deformity of their own vices, and of their enmity and oppoſition to the virtues of others, they are ingenious to invent many plauſible excuſes to ſoften and palliate the ſinfulneſs and abſurdity of their ſpirit and conduct. They will plead their peculiar conſtitution, their ſingular circumſtances, the ſtrength of their paſſions, the power of temptation, the greatneſs of their provocations, with other pretences and apologies too numerous to be mentioned. But all this is frequently no better than pleading one ſin in excuſe for another, which, themſelves would ſee, did they conſider and judge attentively and impartially, can afford them no ground of juſtification. Their excuſes are ſuch as they would not accept from any one who had injured or offended them, and they are ſuch as cannot ſcreen them from the charge of wickedneſs, nor from ſuffering its fatal conſequences.

None we hope will be offended at theſe obſervations and aſſertions; They are made, not from any deſire to blacken human nature, or to reproach any particular perſons; but from a deſire to ſhew to every one that their ſins and follies are works of darkneſs, becauſe they originate in error and deluſion, are carried on by ignorance and ſelf-deception, and therefore tend the more effectually to plunge the authors of them, before they are aware of it, into ruinous guilt and miſery. He who is not guilty cannot feel himſelf injured; and he who is, ſhould conſider it as a part of friendſhip in any one, to warn him againſt theſe deeds of darkneſs, to exhort him to avoid them, and to hold no more

ſellowſhip with them than he would with a moſt poiſonous ſerpent, or malignant enemy.

But as people are apt to be blind and thoughtleſs reſpecting the ſprings and cauſes of their ſins and vices, ſo they are ignorant or inconſiderate reſpecting the beings or perſons who will be offended or injured by them. They do not know, or they will not conſider, how greatly God is offended and provoked by their tranſgreſſions. And they are, perhaps, ready to wonder why he ſhould concern himſelf ſo much with the moral character and conduct of mankind: And why he ſhould be ſo much diſpleaſed at paſſions and actions ſo agreeable to themſelves; And to imagine that as he is infinitely good and gracious, he cannot be much offended at them, or diſpoſed to puniſh them with any great ſeverity. They do not duly conſider that, altho' their ſins and vices cannot harm and injure God, as they do mankind, becauſe he is infinitely above pain, loſs or diſappointment, yet as he is infinitely wiſe, juſt and holy, and has the moſt perfect ſenſe (if we may ſo expreſs it) of what is criminally fooliſh, unjuſt, baſe, unreaſonable and injurious, therefore he cannot avoid being diſpleaſed with it; 'tis contrary and odious to his very nature, and that nature tends to manifeſt its oppoſition to it, by frowning upon the perpetrators of it, and by inflicting upon them a deſerved puniſhment. As a parent is grieved and offended when his children and domeſtics are perverſe, ungrateful and diſobedient, and by their contention and violence diſturb the peace and order of his houſe, and bring trouble, diſgrace and miſery upon his family, ſo reaſon and ſcripture teach us that God muſt be diſpleaſed and diſhonored when his rational offspring, who are his family, *do*, by their folly and wickedneſs, bring diſhonor, diſgrace and miſery upon this family, or upon any members, or conſiderable branches of it. And that very benignity and kindneſs which diſpoſe him to deſire and promote the purity, peace and happineſs of his rational creatures, and of the ſeveral ſocieties into which

they are formed, muſt equally diſpoſe him to view with diſpleaſure and abhorrence the ſpirit and conduct of thoſe who baſely and wickedly diſturb this peace, tarniſh this purity, and deſtroy this happineſs. Could you ſee a man cheating and defrauding one neighbour, robbing and plundering another, abuſing and murdering a third, and not feel the riſings of indignation? Could you behold one acting the ſavage in his family, inſulting and abuſing the meekneſs and innocence of an imploring wife, and committing outrage and cruelty upon his little harmleſs playful children, and not have your paſſions kindle into a flame of wrath ſufficient to conſume ſuch a monſter? Could you behold a ruffian mad with ſlaughter and luſt, attempting to violate the innocent face of youthful beauty, and the ſacred honors of female chaſtity, and not burn to revenge the intolerable outrage at the hazard of your life? And will you believe that a God of infinite juſtice and benevolence, can look upon theſe, and ſimilar crimes and vices, in all the deformity of their nature, and miſery of their conſequences, with a cold indifference? can infinite pity and mercy behold them without kindling into wrath? But God, you will ſay, is not affected with paſſions like ours. He poſſeſſes, however, powers and perfections which correſpond to our faculties and paſſions, though infinitely ſuperior to them in purity and perfection. Hence the ſcriptures, by way of accommodation to our narrow conceptions, repreſent him as clothed with the organs and ſenſes of humanity; hence the following impaſſioned complaints and addreſſes: "They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage; they ſlay the widow and the ſtranger, and murder the fatherleſs; yet they ſay the Lord ſhall not ſee, neither ſhall the God of Jacob regard it." Mark the ſubſequent addreſs—"Underſtand ye brutiſh among the people, and ye fools when will ye be wiſe? He that planted the ear ſhall *he* not hear? He that formed the eye ſhall he not ſee? He that chaſtiſeth the heathen ſhall

not he correct? "He that teacheth man knowledge, ſhall not he know?" Know what? "The thoughts of man that they are vanity." And the evil deeds of man, that they are odious and deſtructive; that they incenſe the anger of God, and tend to pull down upon the heads of thoſe who perſiſt in the perpetration of them a dreadful weight of puniſhment and perdition. But it may be ſaid that the crimes deſcribed in the preceding paſſage were very great and aggravated. True; and what if the crimes of ſome at the preſent day ſhould be found of equal magnitude? muſt they not expect, if perſiſted in, to meet an equal retribution? But where they are ſmaller they tend to increaſe: one ſin leads to another, and that produces a third, and the ſeries continues to augment, till the ſtream of wickedneſs, which was thought to be ſmall at firſt, ſwells to a flood of iniquity; and not only thoſe who firſt ſet it abroach, but others who were drawn in to add to its torrent, are plunged into a ſea of crimes, and finally overwhelmed with a deluge of deſtruction.

But though all this be true, yet mankind are reluctant to believe it. They wink it out of ſight; they cannot think their ſins are ſo diſhonorable or diſpleaſing to God, or that his wrath is incenſed againſt them. And when judgments and calamities befall them, they do not conſider or believe that they are inflicted by the hand of Providence as the puniſhment of their ſins, but they impute them to natural cauſes, and never duly conſider the hand of God which gives direction, energy and effect to theſe natural cauſes; and therefore by undertaking to remove them, or to guard againſt them for the future, they make themſelves eaſy, and embolden themſelves to purſue the ſame vanities and vices, which have in reality, been the moral grounds and cauſes of all their ſufferings—And thus by their thoughtleſsneſs, ſelf-flattery and deception, they encourage themſelves to perſiſt in the works and ways of darkneſs. (E)

Ipswich Public Library
Ipswich, Massachusetts

And as they do not conſider and believe how offenſive theſe works are to God, ſo neither do they perceive how greatly they tend to injure and deſtroy themſelves and their fellow-creatures—For all ſins and vices, whatever flattering appearances they may aſſume, and however they may allure us to the commiſſion of them by promiſes and proſpects of profit, honor and pleaſure, are notwithſtanding works of darkneſs in this additional reſpect, that they lead to trouble, ſhame and miſery. Which obſervation brings us to a particular conſideration of the

2d. General quality of the works of darkneſs, that they are unfruitful—That is, they are uſeleſs and unprofitable, and even hurtful and pernicious.

Men do not generally, if ever, commit ſin merely for the ſake of doing wickedly. No; they are prompted to it by the deſire and expectation of ſome advantage, reward or pleaſure. They flatter themſelves with the proſpect of riches, honor and happineſs. And they may probably gain ſome temporary advantage, ſome ſenſitive gratification from their ſins and vices. But theſe cannot be pure and permanent; they will ſooner or later corrupt, and turn into gall and poiſon. People are not ſo happy as they expect to be even in the very enjoyment of their vices. Great care, vigilance and labour are commonly neceſſary to acquire the gratification of criminal inclinations. Guilt and diſappointment often attend, or immediately follow them. Some thorn lies concealed beneath the roſe, ſome ſting is ſecreted in the honey of criminal indulgence. Some vices are ſcandalous and incur reproach and infamy. Some are expenſive and produce want and poverty. All criminal exceſſes injure the conſtitution, and induce a weakneſs and diſorder, which blunt and finally deſtroy the power of enjoyment. Some crimes diſturb the public peace, oppoſe and violate government, injure the happineſs of ſociety, and thence incur public puniſhment and infamy—Or if they become ſo powerful and prevalent as

to defy the arm of government, and triumph over its authority, they muſt ſoon deſtroy all public order, ſafety and happineſs, and bring on a flood of univerſal confuſion and wretchedneſs.

But after all that can be ſaid, people may not be diſpoſed to believe that the works of darkneſs are ſo unfruitful, or rather that they are exceedingly productive of the fruits of ſhame, vexation and miſery—But 'tis their duty and their intereſt to believe it; and it may appear more obvious and certain, if we go on to conſider the influence which crimes and vices will naturally have upon *religion*, upon *ſociety*, and upon our *moral, ſpiritual and future intereſts and circumſtances*.

And firſt, with regard to the influence which wickedneſs will have upon *religion*.

If people indulge themſelves in ſin, in neglecting the truths and ordinances, and in diſobeying the commands of God; if they allow themſelves to commit fraud, injuſtice, intemperance, lewdneſs, with other ſpecies of vice and wickedneſs, they muſt ſoon find, if they do not renounce all thought and conſideration, that religion is againſt them; that it condemns their criminal purpoſes, plans and practices, and threatens them with puniſhment, if they continne to purſue them. What now can they do? They muſt either renounce their ſins, their favorite deſigns and pleaſures, or they muſt renounce religion. But they do not wiſh to do either of theſe; nor to proceed with a painful conſciouſneſs of guilt and inconſiſtency—They will therefore endeavour to explain away the more rigid parts of religion, and to model the remainder into ſuch a form as will correſpond with their inclinations. And in accompliſhing this accommodating plan they may eaſily avail themſelves of the aſſiſtance of a number of modern divines and philoſophers—But if they are men of thought, they may probably find that with all this aſſiſtance, they cannot accompliſh their purpoſe; that religion is too plain, determinate and inflexible, to be bent and moulded into ſuch a form as

will countenance their criminal paſſions and practices. So long as they profeſs to believe the ſcriptures to be the word of God, they cannot eaſily ſatisfy themſelves that they admit of their reconciling the oppoſite intereſts and ſervices of God and Mammon. They muſt therefore be again at a nonplus, and if they are determined to perſiſt in their ſins, they muſt perſuade themſelves that the religion of the Bible is but a fable, and ſo utterly reject it—But they will not, probably, renounce all religion, the chriſtian religion only ſhall be ſacrificed at preſent, and the religion of nature ſhall be ſpared, and extolled as needful and ſufficient to guide them in the way of ſafety and happineſs.—But they will not, they cannot under the influence of their preſent views and principles, adhere to the dictates of natural religion; for this implies the belief of a Supreme Deity, the Creator, Preſerver and Governor of all things; a being of infinite and immutable power, wiſdom, holineſs, juſtice, truth and faithfulneſs; who is preſent with all his creatures, and perfectly acquainted with all their affections, words and actions. But admitting the exiſtence of a God of ſuch perfections, and the reality of our relations to him, the conſequence which is neceſſarily drawn from this conceſſion by nature and reaſon is, that this ſupreme, all-perfect being ought to be honored and worſhipped, loved and obeyed by all mankind. That he approves virtue and condemns vice, loves righteouſneſs and abhors iniquity. What then will become of the diſciple of natural religion? For that is as real an enemy to his corruptions and vices as the revelation which he has rejected. If he continues in the indulgence of them God may puniſh him: he may ſtill be in danger of temporal and eternal miſery. He has renounced Revelation, the only ſource of light and hope to fallen ſinners, and he can have no aſſurance from the light of nature that God will pardon his offences, that he will not take vengeance on his iniquities, that the courſe of partial ſin and ſuffering which has commen-

ced in this world, will not be extended, continued and compleated in the world to come—He is launched on an ocean of doubt and darkneſs, where gloomy fears, ſuſpicions and preſages of evil muſt haunt and agitate his mind, and poiſon all his pleaſures. He muſt therefore drown all thought in abſolute ſtupidity and forgetfulneſs, or he muſt renounce his ſins and become a virtuous and religious believer, or plunge into the gulf of perfect infidelity and atheiſm—That is, he muſt perſuade himſelf that there is no God; or none that regards the concerns or the actions of men, or who will ever call them to an account for their crimes and vices. And he will conſequently deny the immortality of the ſoul, and the exiſtence of any ſtate of future rewards or puniſhments. He will believe that he is nothing better than a reaſoning brute; that his ſoul periſhes with his body, and rots and ſleeps forever with its kindred animals, in the duſt of the earth.—And now he has nothing to reſtrain his vices, to curb his luxury and riot, or deter him from any purſuit or pleaſure which his ſoul deſires. Upon his preſent principles there is no law to reſtrain him, no conſcience to ſting him, no God to condemn him, no future rewards or puniſhments to animate his hopes or excite his fears—All his hopes and fears, his views and proſpects, joys and pleaſures being confined to this world, and his term of enjoyment being ſhort and uncertain, he will naturally be ſtimulated to improve it with ardor and activity. And to devote himſelf to the gratification of ſenſual appetite and paſſion as his only happineſs, and to remove or bear down by artifice or violence every obſtruction, every opponent which ſtands in his way. And when men have adopted ſuch dark, deluding and deſtructive principles and practices as theſe, what can reſtrain them from the exceſſes of wickedneſs and violence? Will a regard to honor, to humanity, or will the impreſſion of natural affection reſtrain them? by no means, for the determined indulgence of wicked appetites and paſſions will

ſoon exterminate every uſeful and laudable affection from their hearts—Can they be controuled by the force of law or the arm of civil government? They may be reſtrained by theſe means from open, ſcandalous and deſtructive crimes and vices, while their numbers are ſmall; but ſhould their numbers be increaſed and extended—ſhould they become the predominant party, muſt not their principles and purſuits induce them to reſiſt and overthrow all legitimate, equitable and efficient government, and to erect in the room of it a government correſponding to their own principles and paſſions, managed and adminiſtered by rulers and magiſtrates, impious and profligate like themſelves? Who would explode all religion, aboliſh all divine worſhip and ordinances, diſcard all juſtice and equity, violate all the principles of morality and humanity, and licence all crimes, every ſpecies of baſeneſs, treachery, cruelty and oppreſſion, except ſuch as would be deſtructive of their own authority, tyranny, luxury and avarice. How inexpreſſibly deplorable muſt be the condition of a people thus overrun with infidelity, atheiſm and wickedneſs? Curs'd with a government without religion, without virtue, without any regard to God, or juſtice and benevolence to man.

We do not aſſert however, that the works of darkneſs, the deeds of error and wickedneſs, when they are adopted and purſued, always proceed to theſe horrid extremes, but only that ſuch are their natural tendency and effects. Every vicious man is not an avowed infidel or atheiſt; but every vicious man, who obſtinately perſiſts in the commiſſion of wickedneſs, muſt, of courſe, become a practical infidel or atheiſt. If he profeſs, verbally, to believe the chriſtian religion, yet he denies it in heart and practice; it makes little or no impreſſion on his mind, and has leſs influence on his conduct—and he who rejects chriſtianity, and profeſſes to believe the religion of nature, either does not underſtand it, or derives no influence from it—in words he acknowledges God, but in works denies

him. But although wickedneſs adopted and purſued, does not always end in avowed infidelity and atheiſm, yet its tendency to ſuch an iſſue is ſtrong, and it very frequently terminates in it.* Now if the works of darkneſs have ſuch a pernicious influence upon the

---

* It is, I preſume, no violation of charity to aſſert that there is great reaſon to believe, that a large proportion of thoſe who have renounced the chriſtian religion, and adopted the principles of deiſm and infidelity, have been impelled to ſuch a conduct by their enmity to thoſe doctrines, precepts and threatenings of chriſtianity, which mortified their pride, condemned ſome favorite paſſion or purſuit, and denounced vengeance againſt them if they dared to perſiſt in it—And when they had once commenced deiſts, the ſtep to total infidelity and atheiſm, was eaſy and natural—And if they have not avowedly taken it, yet they have diſguiſed and miſrepreſented the character, the government and the laws of God, as alſo the nature, the condition, and deſtination of man in ſuch a manner, as to weaken and deſtroy the principles and obligations of piety and virtue. And they have varniſhed over the deformity of vice, and even taught the lawfulneſs and expediency of it in ſuch a degree, as to encourage and warrant mankind in the unreſtrained commiſſion of it. If any one wiſhes to ſee this ſubject illuſtrated in a clear and maſterly manner, he may conſult Dr. Dwight's two ſermons upon the nature and danger of infidel Philoſophy.

But the moſt affecting and alarming image and example of the baneful influence which the works of darkneſs have upon religion, have been exhibited by the philoſophers of France, and by the leaders and governors of the French Republic, and other principal characters in that nation. The errors and vices which had prevailed in that kingdom previous to the revolution, had led many of its ſubjects to adopt an infidel and atheiſtical philoſophy. This philoſophy was operative in producing the revolution, and was extended and confirmed by it, and the principal promoters of it, till finally it burſt forth like a flood in public acts and meaſures hoſtile and deſtructive to all the doctrines and inſtitutions of religion, and to all the principles of virtue, humanity, ſincerity and juſtice. As evidence of the truth of theſe aſſertions, it may be ſufficient to read the accounts given in various publications, of the conduct of the French government towards their own ſubjects, and towards thoſe ſtates and kingdoms which have been invaded by their troops, or conquered by their intrigues and their arms. In theſe publications we are aſſured by inconteſtable authority, that the French government have decreed to ABOLISH the ALTARS OF GOD, to deſtroy the chriſtian Sabbath, and the ſacred bonds of marriage—that death is an everlaſting ſleep, and that an Inſcription to this effect be placed in capitals at the entrance of their grave yards: "That the Convention ſolemnly renounced both the belief of a God, and the immortality of the ſoul, aſſerted that all religions were the daughters of ignorance and pride, and decreed the publication of theſe ſentiments in all languages." "The Supreme Being," ſays a member of the committee of public inſtruction, in an official report of that committee to the national convention; "The Eternal Being is no other than nature uncreated and uncreatable; and the only providence, is the aſſociation of mankind in freedom and equality. Man, when free, wants no other divinity than himſelf. Reaſon dethrones both the kings of the earth, and the kings of heaven. No monarchy above, if we wiſh to preſerve our republic below. Volumes have been written to determine whether a republic of atheiſts could exiſt. I maintain that every other republic is a chimera. If you once admit the exiſtence of a heavenly ſovereign, you introduce the wooden horſe" (that is an engine of deſtruction) "within your walls. What you adore by day will be your deſtruction by night. A people of theiſts would neceſſarily become a people of revelationiſts"—i. e. thoſe who believe a God will believe divine revelation. If the reader would wiſh to obtain further information upon this ſubject, let him peruſe, among other publications, the appendix to Dr. Morse's Thankſgiving Sermon, delivered on the 29th day of November, 1798.

principles and the practice of religion ; if they induce men to adopt the impious and dangerous errors of infidelity and atheism, errors which often lead men to the most fatal extremes of vice, licentiousness and cruelty ; those who retain any suitable sense of the excellency, dignity and importance of religion, must have a proportionable sense of the deadly nature and tendency of these works of wickedness, and of the indispensable duty and interest of abstaining from all fellowship with such deluding and destructive practices.

And they will perceive still further reasons for abstaining from them, if they go on to consider in the next place, the pernicious influence which error and wickedness will exert upon the state of civil society and government.

And for this purpose let them suppose that a people or nation are, in a predominant measure, wise, religious and virtuous, that they have a free, mild and equitable government ; that their legislators and magistrates are wise, just, faithful and benevolent. But suppose further that the deeds of darkness begin to prevail among such a people in a degree uncommon, and to be countenanced and practised by a considerable number of them ; that the leaven of infidelity, atheism, anarchy and confusion, begins to ferment and swell and threaten to burst from its confinement ; what will be their influence upon the state of society and government ? Will it not be that those who are most infected with these evils, will begin to grow discontented, restless and turbulent ? that they will repine at their own condition, and envy the prosperity of their neighbours ? And being ambitious of wealth, honor and pleasure, and yet too ignorant or too idle to obtain them by lawful means, or to enjoy them in a warrantable measure, they will wish to obtain them by fraud, corruption and violence. Unawed by the authority of God, unrestrained by the bonds of virtue and religion, uninfluenced by the principles of modesty

and humanity, they will wiſh to give themſelves up to the impulſe of their luſts and paſſions ; but reſtrained by numbers more virtuous than themſelves, they will ſtudy to corrupt and ſeduce them to the adoption of their own principles. Check'd and embarraſſed by the majeſty of the laws, and the authority of Government, they will wiſh to ſubvert them. And being emulous of places of honor, truſt and profit, and unable to riſe to the poſſeſſion of them, by fair and lawful means they will attempt to do it by flattery, falſehood and treachery. Encouraged by the countenance and the confidence of the idle, the reſtleſs, the diſappointed, the embarraſſed, and the vicious, prompted and aſſiſted by the intriguing influence, and the inſidious policy of ſome foreign power, they will endeavor to diffeminate their licentious and diſorganizing principles, and to form and execute the deſign of a general and deſtructive revolution. For this purpoſe they will form clubs and ſecret ſocieties, that they may the more eaſily and ſafely mature their plans, ſyſtematize their operations, propagate their ſentiments, and promote an extenſive intercourſe between all the members and branches of their fraternity. They will circulate books of the moſt impious principles and hurtful tendency. They will aim to corrupt Printers and Editors of Newſpapers, and induce them to fill their various periodical publications with falſe repreſentations, groundleſs ſurmiſes, ſlanders and calumnies againſt the moſt virtuous, wiſe and dignified characters. They will watch the Magiſtrates and Miniſters of Government, miſconſtrue their laws, condemn their meaſures, depreſs their virtues, magnify their imperfections, and endeavour to load their characters with reproach and ridicule, that by ſuch means, they may weaken their influence, deſtroy their authority, and fruſtrate all their operations for the order, ſafety and happineſs of the community. They will have the addreſs, by procuring the ſuffrages of the ignorant, the

credulous and the artful, to introduce ſome of their principal leaders into public bodies, and offices, of ſuperior influence and importance ; who will there exert themſelves with unremitted zeal, art and activity to procure ſuch meaſures as will conduce to the proſperity of their dangerous deſigns, and to obſtruct and fruſtrate ſuch as are for the real benefit and ſecurity of their country. By theſe and other arts of ſubtilty and darkneſs, too various and complicated to be minutely traced or deſcribed, they will extend and ripen their plans of iniquity, till they begin to diſcover themſelves in an open and hoſtile oppoſition to the laws, the officers and friends of government, and to break out in ſedition, inſurrection and rebellion. And theſe, if not ſuppreſſed by the arm of military power and juſtice, will open the door to an army of foreign invaders from that land of pretended light and liberty, which, with a monſtrous and cruel abſurdity, profeſſes to give freedom to mankind at the point of the bayonet—But wo to that people, to that nation which is doomed to accept the bondage of ſuch a freedom. By the malignant force of its devouring influence, her government is ſubverted, her liberties are deſtroyed, her fathers are murdered or driven into baniſhment, her peace and ſafety are annihilated, her religion is inſulted and trampled under foot, her houſes are plundered and burnt, her matrons and virgins are violated, and her helpleſs children and harmleſs infants do not eſcape the edge of the bloody ſword. Is this a picture too dark and gloomy to be juſt ? Is it not rather, but an imperfect repreſentation of the diſmal calamities which have been realized by thoſe European countries which have experienced the fatal effects of the works of darkneſs in the fulneſs of their policy and power ?

But however dreadful and deſtructive theſe effects may be upon the natural and civil privileges and enjoyments of a people, yet we may go on to obſerve in the *laſt place*, that they exert an influence ſtill more calamitous and deplorable upon their ſouls, and their

moral, ſpiritual and future intereſts and circumſtances.

For ignorance, infidelity and wickedneſs, in proportion to their power and prevalence, blot out from the minds and hearts of men, all remaining ſparks of light and virtue, honor and humanity, warrantable hope and comfort, and degrade and carnalize them into the worſt kind of brutes and ſavages. For how poor, how deſpicable, how miſerable and pitiable an animal is man, without a God, without a ſoul, and without any deſire, hope or proſpect of immortality! Blind and ignorant in himſelf, he rejects divine revelation, the only ſource of light, of certainty, of direction and conſolation to fallen ſinners. Weak and helpleſs by nature, unable to guide, to ſupport and defend himſelf, or to obtain or ſecure to himſelf the poſſeſſion or enjoyment of honor, ſafety or happineſs, he renounces all belief and confidence in that God whoſe paternal power, wiſdom and mercy are alone ſufficient to ſuſtain, protect and comfort him, in this dreary wilderneſs of labors, dangers, ſnares and ſufferings. Incapable of the pleaſures of rational ſociety, of the joys and refinements of friendſhip, of virtue, piety and internal peace and harmony, he ſeeks his whole happineſs in the tranſient, intermitting gratifications of ſenſitive appetite and paſſion; in the eager and lawleſs purſuit of which, by endeavouring to bear down every perſon who obſtructs his progreſs, he becomes an enemy to every man, and makes every man an enemy to himſelf, and thus embroils himſelf in endleſs anxiety, embarraſſment and danger—In love with exiſtence, and clinging to it with an ardent wiſh of its everlaſting duration, he ſtrangely rejects the belief of his own immortality, or treats it with indifference and contempt; and conſents to exchange it for the momentary pleaſures of this world, and finally to ſink into everlaſting nothingneſs and oblivion; or to riſk the ſuffering of eternal deſpair and miſery. If he die in ignorance and ſtupidity, he can ſee nothing before him but the dark and dreary gulph of endleſs annihilation,

But if reaſon and conſcience ſhould awake, at laſt, to the belief of a God, of religion, and of a future ſtate of eternal rewards and puniſhments, how muſt his ſoul be agitated with anguiſh and terror? His paſt crimes and vices in long and dreadful order, riſe up to his affrighted view; God from above frowns upon his guilty ſoul, and perdition from beneath yawns wide to receive him. How dreadful, at the awful tribunal of God, will be his account for reaſon dethron'd, conſcience abus'd, virtue inſulted, religion profaned, deſpiſed and rejected; talents and privileges perverted, and every thing precious and ſacred treated with contempt and outrage? Then the poor, miſerable creature will find, to his ſorrow and amazement, that there is a God of infinite majeſty, truth and juſtice, whoſe boundleſs love and mercy he has deſpiſed and rejected, and whoſe awful wrath is incenſed againſt him. Then he will find that he has a ſoul which muſt exiſt forever to endure the juſt puniſhment of his wickedneſs. And how will he lament with tears of anguiſh and ſelf-condemnation, that he did not repent, believe and obey the wiſe and holy commands and counſels of God? That he did not ſecure, through the merits and interceſſion of a merciful Saviour, the final enjoyment of eternal life and happineſs? How will he lament that by perſiſting in the works of darkneſs, he has found, by the bittereſt experience, that they are fruitful in nothing but unutterable infamy, anguiſh and deſpair? And how will he wiſh, like the rich voluptuous ſenſualiſt in the parable, to ſend a meſſenger from the dead, to warn his vicious infidel companions, to repent and abandon their wicked works, leſt they ſhould bring them to the place of intolerable torment?

And now what more profitable *improvement* can we make of our whole diſcourſe, than to ſuffer ourſelves to be led by it in the

1ſt. place, to ſerious reflection and enquiry how far, and in what inſtances, we ourſelves have been guilty of holding fellowſhip, in any degree, with the

works of darkneſs. We are not willing, perhaps, to acknowledge that we have been guilty, or to enter into a ſtrict and impartial examination of our paſt ſpirit and conduct, leſt it ſhould preſent to our minds a ſubject of painful mortification. For muſt we not all confeſs, that we have been chargeable, more or leſs, with the commiſſion of ſin, or the neglect of duty? We may apprehend that others are more criminal than ourſelves; and if this were admitted to be true, yet are we intirely innocent? Every ſin is a work of darkneſs; and from every ſin, the moſt wiſe and virtuous dare not claim a perfect freedom. They have reaſon to bewail their many faults and offences with tears of humility and repentance. And if the beſt are not free, how many criminal vanities, and aggravated tranſgreſſions, have others to deplore? And however diſagreeable and mortifying the work of reflection and repentance may be, yet 'tis abſolutely neceſſary to be done; and we are bound to be ſincere and faithful in the performance of it.

And we are ſolemnly called upon this day, not only by our civil Fathers, but by reaſon, by conſcience, by the word of God, and by the perilous circumſtances of our country, and even of the whole chriſtian world, penitently to remember our ſins, and to bewail them before God with deep humility and contrition. We are a people whom God hath been pleaſed to diſtinguiſh with privileges and benefits, civil and religious, great in their nature, their number, their magnitude and variety. And whom he hath placed in a ſituation, and under advantages, to cultivate and improve virtue, religion, national peace, liberty, dignity and happineſs to a degree of perfection ſeldom or never experienced. And have we been ſuitably grateful to him for theſe invaluable bleſſings? Have we made ſuch an improvement of them as he might reaſonably expect? Have we not been ungrateful and inſenſible of his favours; and converted them into means of pride, vanity and extravagance? Have not irreligion, infidelity,

profanity, intemperance, impurity and licentiouſneſs, with other vices, too greatly prevailed in our land? And have they not provoked the diſpleaſure of God againſt us? Many of our capital towns and cities have been viſited with ſuch peſtilential diſeaſes, as have baffled the ſkill of Phyſicians, and ſwept off multitudes to their graves. And are not thoſe towns and cities afflicted ſtill with painful apprehenſions of the return of theſe fatal diſorders?

Besides, a powerful nation, a terrible republic, ſubtil in its intriguing policy, unjuſt in its aggreſſions and demands, and cruel in its attacks and injuries; a republic which God ſeems to have raiſed up for a ſcourge to a ſinful world, is let looſe upon our trade and commerce, to deſpoil us of our property, abuſe, impriſon and ſlaughter our brethren, and drag us into the calamities of a ſingular and diſtreſſing war—And if ſimple war, with its uſual antecedents and concomitants, were her only object, ſhe might juſtly be leſs dreaded; but that which is peculiarly grievous and alarming, is, that her principles of infidelity, atheiſm, licentiouſneſs and anarchy are diſſeminated, and have made, we have reaſon to fear, an awful progreſs in our land: Threatening, by their baleful influence, to corrupt our citizens, ſubvert our government, deſtroy our liberty, independence and happineſs, and involve us in a diſmal ſcene of confuſion and wretchedneſs. This has been her avowed and conſtant practice, to ſend forward a hoſt of infidel, diſorganizing principles as pioneers to prepare the way for her introduction into thoſe ſtates and nations, which ſhe intended to conquer by her arms, and humble to her will. And by theſe means ſhe is attempting to accompliſh her cruel purpoſes againſt theſe United States. Ever ſince they formed a connection with her, ſhe has been laboring by artifice and intrigue, to render them dependent on her power, and ſubject to her will. And ſince her revolution, and the war of plunder and oppreſſion which ſhe has carried on againſt all the nations in her neigh-

bourhood, 'tis more apparent than ever, that ſhe has formed and maintains a fixed and deliberate deſign, to gain, as ſhe has over other ſtates and kingdoms, an abſolute aſcendency over our government, our public meaſures and councils, our liberty, commerce and riches, and render them ſubſervient to her deſigns of ambition, conqueſt and luxury. And ſhe *has* had, and probably *has* at this moment, her agents and emiſſaries in the very boſom of our country; but theſe could effect nothing, were it not that too many of our own citizens are enough infatuated to eſpouſe her cauſe, and to endeavour to give energy and ſucceſs to her ruinous influence—And this myſtery of iniquity and darkneſs, operating ſometimes by ſecret artifice, and ſometimes by open force, tends and threatens to produce all the deadly fruits and conſequences, which have been already deſcribed.

This being our ſituation, and theſe our circumſtances, what is to be done?

We muſt in the 2d place, improve our ſubject by bringing it home to our own hearts, conſciences and concerns. We muſt be effectually rouzed and excited by the numerous and powerful motives and conſiderations which it has preſented to our view, to renounce all fellowſhip with ſin, all communion with the works of darkneſs; and to bear a firm and unequivocal teſtimony againſt all error, infidelity, impiety and wickedneſs, and againſt all the means and meaſures which are purſued againſt the laws, the government, the honor, independence and ſafety of our country. We muſt labor by all ſuitable means to promote and cultivate union and harmony in our religious and political ſentiments and opinions. The wiſeſt, the ableſt, the moſt virtuous and faithful patriots and friends to our country muſt be choſen for legiſlators, magiſtrates and miniſters of government. And when they are choſen and appointed, we muſt give them our approbation, our reſpect and confidence—We muſt encourage and promote, to the utmoſt of our power, union,

attachment and confidence between ſubjects and rulers, and endeavour to avoid and ſuppreſs whatever tends to weaken and deſtroy them. We muſt encourage and promote meaſures of public ſafety and defence by our countenance and approbation, and endeavour by ſteady and vigorous exertions to give them energy and effect.

But it ſhould be our principal concern to ſecure the preſence and bleſſing of God. And for this purpoſe, let me repeat it, we muſt reflect upon our paſt offences, our ſinfulneſs of heart and life, and cordially repent of them before him, imploring and obtaining his forgiveneſs through the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt—We muſt confide in his infinite mercy, and labor, by his aſſiſting grace to renounce our errors and vices, to reform our lives and manners, and to yield a ſincere and uniform obedience to his will. By theſe means we may confidently hope to obtain the favour, ſupport and protection of that Being who is infinitely powerful, wiſe and good; and if he be for us, who can be againſt us to any effect? Guarded and defended by his almighty providence and grace, though a countleſs hoſt of enemies, or even of demons, ſhould encamp againſt us, we need not fear either their policy or their power.

And theſe moral and political meaſures of defence and ſafety ſhould be adopted in earneſt and in ſeaſon. Nothing in concerns of ſuch importance, can be more ſtupid and dangerous than procraſtination and delay. For matters ſeem to be drawing towards a criſis pregnant with conſequences of the higheſt magnitude and importance. It may not, perhaps, be long, before the intereſting point will be determined, whether we ſhall remain a free, independent and happy nation, or whether we ſhall fall a prey to the force of artifice and deluſion, yield to the horrors of civil war, of foreign invaſion, and ſink under the weight of violence and tyranny into a gulph of ſlavery and ruin. 'Tis time therefore for every friend to the religion, to the gov-

ernment and ſafety of his country, to come forward, and take a vigorous and decided part in her favour. 'Tis time for all thoſe, who, through ignorance, misinformation, or impoſition have been betrayed to encourage and promote ſuch men and meaſures as are hoſtile to our country, to examine them, to diſcover their criminal and miſchievous nature and tendency, and in ſpite of every motive of pride, reſentment, party-ſpirit or connection, to renounce them forever.

But perhaps ſome perſons may think that theſe are all vain and groundleſs alarms; and there is no reaſon to apprehend events ſo pernicious and deplorable.—But certainly ſuch perſons muſt be inattentive and uninformed; or being well informed, they do not judge honeſtly and impartially of the real ſtate of things and the obvious cauſes we have for painful apprehenſion. They certainly judge and act under the influence of ſome prejudice or paſſion which blinds and perverts their judgment and conduct. We do not wiſh or deſign to cenſure or alarm any one without cauſe.—Nor do we wiſh any to depend merely on our aſſertions: But we wiſh them to ſeek the means of information, to read what has been written, to conſider what has been acted, and to examine and weigh them deliberately and impartially, and then judge for themſelves. We wiſh them to know and conſider the conduct of the French government towards thoſe nations which they have deceived by their profeſſions, enſnared by their intrigues, and conquered by their arms—The deſtruction they have made of their rights and liberties, the countleſs millions of treaſure they have extorted from them by artifice and violence, and the deſolation and miſery they have ſpread among them by plunder and oppreſſion. We wiſh them to conſider the injuries they have offered to the government and people of theſe United States—The depredations they have committed on our commerce; the inſult and cruelty with which they have treated our brethren, and the

indignities they have offered to our Ambaſſadors of peace: They refuſed to accredit them, they labored to enſnare them, they inſidiouſly demanded of them loans and gratuities to a vaſt amount.* We wiſh them to conſider the reſtleſs activity, the unremitted diligence which the emiſſaries and partiſans of France in this country have exerted to diſgrace our rulers, and weaken their authority, to obſtruct the meaſures of our government, to detach the people from their affection and adherence to it, to poiſon their minds with principles of infidelity, error, anarchy and treaſon, and ſtir them up to inſurrection and revolt—Such an inſurrection was excited ſome years paſt in the frontiers of Pennſylvania, to ſuppreſs which, ſubjected the nation to a million of dollars expence—another has actually begun to diſcover itſelf in the ſame ſtate.† We wiſh people to conſider theſe alarming facts and appearances, and then candidly to judge, whether we have not too many reaſons for painful apprehenſion; though not, I truſt, for depreſſion and diſcouragement—And we wiſh them to carry their conſiderations ultimately into a ſerious channel, and to improve them as motives of humiliation, repentance and reformation, whereby the anger of God may be averted, and the ſmiles of his favour and bleſſing may return.

But that there ſhould be any perſons in this country, who claim the name and the privileges of Ameri-

* Whoever wiſhes for further information upon the foregoing ſubjects, and a fuller evidence of the truth of the obſervations which have been made, may read Mr. Harper's obſervations on the diſpute between the United States and France: In which they will find that the Dutch have been plundered by France of fifty-two millions of dollars in leſs than two years, under the name of amity and alliance. And that eſtates were confiſcated in Belgium, by the ſame power, to the amount of two hundred and fifty millions of dollars—And that in 1795 it was computed that two millions of perſons had been maſſacred in France during the revolution. And they may read a ſhort hiſtory of the revolution in the republic of Geneva, effected by the artifice and violence of France. They may read the hiſtory of the ſubjugation of Switzerland, by Mallet du Pan; alſo the diſpatches of our Envoys to the French republic. And they may enquire whether a late account in our public papers be not founded upon ſufficient authority, which ſtates that the French have extorted from the ſeveral nations which they have overun by their troops, or ſubjected to their power, the enormous ſum of ſixteen hundred millions of pounds, excluſive of the property they deſtroyed by plunder, fire and ſword. They may enquire alſo whether it be not true that the French cruiſers, officers and agents, have treated our maritime brethren with great inſult and cruelty.

† It has ſince, as all have underſtood, been happily ſuppreſſed.

cans, and who know and conſider all theſe things, and yet remain careleſs and unconcerned; nay more, that there ſhould be any (and can it be queſtioned whether there are ſuch?) who knowing and conſidering them, do rather enjoy them, and wiſh for an entire revolution in our government, and alteration in our circumſtances, effected by that foreign influence, ſo much and ſo juſtly dreaded by others, is really quite aſtoniſhing! What advantages they can expect from ſuch a revolution, or how they can hope to eſcape the diſmal calamities which muſt inevitably attend, and follow it, is wholly unaccountable—That ſome may eſcape them, and that a few may obtain, by means of them, a great acceſſion of power, riches and luxury, is not impoſſible. But could they be contented to hold theſe advantages with a ſpirit of baſe ſervility to the arbitrary domination of French maſters? Could they be ſo deſtitute of all principles of virtue, honor and humanity as to riot in the ſpoils of their country? Can they behold the ruin of their nation, the ſubverſion of its government, the diſgrace, baniſhment or death of its legiſlators and magiſtrates, the deſtruction of its commerce, the diſſipation of its riches, the poverty and miſery of its ſubjects, without anguiſh and diſtreſs? Can they contemplate without pity and terror, even in imagination, the bloody fiend of civil war, attended by the cruel arms of a foreign foe, ſtalking over the once happy plains of America, burning her towns and villages, ſlaughtering her ſons, polluting the venerable heads of the aged, and the fair and lovely forms of the young, with bloody outrage or brutal luſt; and filling all places, once the retreat of ſocial labor, happineſs and love, with tears and groans, deſolation and death! if they can, their hearts muſt be harder than a rock of adamant!

But *here*, it may be ſaid, we have no reaſon to expect ſuch dreadful ſcenes.

They have been realiſed in Germany, in Belgium and in Switzerland, and who can promiſe that they

would not take place here if the ſame cauſes and inſtruments ſhould ſucceſsfully operate and finally prevail ?*

How much reaſon therefore have we for the exerciſe of repentance, virtue and holineſs ? For union in heart and practice in the cauſe of our religion, our government and our country ? and to ſtudy by all means to ſecure the favour and protection of God, that he may never ſuffer us to fall a prey to ſuch overwhelming calamities.

And now to conclude : Since this world is ſubject to ſuch agitations, convulſions and miſeries ; ſince thoſe places and nations where peace, ſafety and happineſs were moſt reaſonably to be expected, are not exempted from great troubles and afflictions ; and ſince all ſtations and circumſtances are ſubject to loſſes, diſappointments and diſtreſſes, 'tis in vain to expect

* As every perſon into whoſe hands theſe diſcourſes may fall, may not have had opportunity to read the charge given by the Biſhop of Landaff to the Clergy of his Dioceſe, I will take the liberty to preſent a few paſſages of it to their view ; as they are ſuited to confirm and illuſtrate in a clear and forcible manner, the obſervations and aſſertions which have been made above. The Biſhop, who is a man of great ability, knowledge and candour, who is in the beſt ſituation to obtain accurate accounts of the ſpirit and conduct of the French—thus addreſſes himſelf to his hearers :

" You will not, I think, be guilty of a breach of chriſtian charity in the uſe of even harſh language, when you explain to them [your people] the cruelties which the French have uſed in every country which they have invaded, for no language can reach the atrocity of the fact. They every where promiſe protection to the pooreſt of every thing which they poſſeſs ; they plunder their cottages, and they ſet them on fire, when the plunder is exhauſted ; they torture the owners to diſcover their wealth, and they put them to death when they have none to diſcover ; they violate females of all ages ; they inſult the hoary head, and trample on all the decencies of life. This is no exaggerated picture ; whoever has read the accounts of the proceedings of the French in Suabia, in Holland, in Italy, in Switzerland, know it is not."

In another paragraph he aſks, " Are the French coming here to enrich the nation ? Will they pay attention to the poor of this country, when they have ſo many thouſands of infinitely poorer perſons in their own ? Will they reward their ſeditious adherents amongſt us ? Yeas, they will reward them, as all hiſtory informs us, ſuch traitors ever have been rewarded—they will reward them with contempt, pillage, beggary, ſlavery and death. The nation will be ruined by exorbitant impoſitions ; our naval power will be deſtroyed ; our commerce transferred to France ; our lands will be divided (not amongſt thoſe who wickedly covet their neighbours goods) but amongſt the French ſoldiers, who will be every where ſtationed, as the Roman ſoldiers were of old, to awe the people, and collect the taxes ; the flower of our youth will be compelled to ſerve in foreign countries, to promote the wicked projects of French ambition—Great Britain will be made an appendage to continental deſpotiſm." " And after ſeas of blood have been ſhed, millions of lives loſt, towns plundered, villages burned, and unutterable calamity has been endured by perſons of all ranks ; after all this is done, what advantages will you have obtained beyond what you now poſſeſs ?"

reſt and happineſs in the preſent ſtate; 'tis in vain to expect them in any ſtate but that where we ſhall be totally delivered from ſin, and all its baleful effects. With what earneſtneſs and diligence ſhould we therefore exert ourſelves to mortify our corruptions, to cultivate virtue and holineſs, to obtain the bleſſings and comforts of ſalvation, and a fixed and animating proſpect of eternal reſt and happineſs in the kingdom of Glory?

A FIRM belief that God reigns, that he overules and orders all creatures, actions and events in this world, with infinite wiſdom, rectitude and goodneſs; an unreſerved confidence in his mercy, a free acceſs to his throne of grace, and a cheering hope of final introduction to his preſence in glory, will ſerve to mitigate our fears and ſufferings, to ſupport us under all the trials and afflictions of the preſent ſtate, and reconcile us to the idea of bidding it an everlaſting adieu. O then let us have recourſe to the ſupports and conſolations of religion. Let us ſtudy to poſſeſs and increaſe that faith which will prove an anchor to the ſoul amidſt all the ſtorms of calamity and temptation by which we are agitated on the boiſterous ocean of this world: And then we ſhall finally arrive ſafe at the haven of eternal reſt, where no enemies will aſſault us, no temptation ſeduce us, no ſin nor ſuffering oppreſs our hearts with ſorrow and diſtreſs; but unclouded light, liberty, glory and bleſſedneſs ſhall elevate and tranſport our ſouls for ever and ever.

AMEN.

Ips. Pan. Lay
253.1
Fricke

Ipswich Public Library
Ipswich, Massachusetts